Assembly Resolution No. 1163

BY: M. of A. Raga

COMMEMORATING the Burmese American community's celebration of Thingyan, the Burmese New Year Water Festival, which is celebrated April 13-16

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to honor, with pleasure and great pride, the Burmese American community of the State of New York upon the occasion of the celebration of Thingyan; and

WHEREAS, Thingyan, also known as the Burmese New Year, is a festival that usually occurs in the middle of April, marking the transition from the old year to the new one based on the traditional Burmese lunisolar calendar; and

WHEREAS, The name "Thingyan", originates from the Sanskrit "samkranti", meaning the "period of transition"; and

WHEREAS, The mythological origin of Thingyan holds that Thagya Min (the King of the Devas) descended to earth at the New Year to observe human conduct, with the festival marking his arrival and departure; and

WHEREAS, Historians note that Thingyan was first celebrated during the Bagan period, coinciding with the establishment of the Bagan Kingdom in the 9th century CE, and historical evidence suggests these festivals were celebrated throughout the reign of King Anawrahta in the 11th century, continuing into the 12th and 13th centuries; and

WHEREAS, The Myanmar Calendar Advisory Board determines the date on which Thingyan falls each year, typically in mid-April, and the festival typically spans five days; and

WHEREAS, On December 5, 2024, the Ata Thingyan Festival was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, acknowledging its cultural significance and the collective efforts to preserve this vibrant tradition; and

WHEREAS, A hallmark of the celebration is the symbolic throwing of water, representing the washing away of sins and bad luck from the previous year; celebrants also engage in water fights using buckets and water guns, and festivities usually include pouring water on Buddha images, giving older community members manicures and pedicures, donating food, giving to charity, joining meditation retreats, and enjoying musical performances, and dance troupes set up on temporary stages called pandals; and

WHEREAS, As of 2023, the Burmese American population stands at approximately 240,000 with the New York City Metro area among the top destinations for Burmese Americans, with an estimated population of 21,000; and

WHEREAS, Utica, New York is home to a significant Karen community,

an ethnic group largely from Myanmar, with the Burmese comprising almost half of Utica's Asian population; and

WHEREAS, The Queens Public Library's Elmhurst branch has celebrated Thingyan, and in April 2024, the library marked the expansion of its Burmese-language collection, the only circulating Burmese collection in New York City, which tripled in size with the addition of 230 books purchased with $5,000 donated by the Burmese-American community; and

WHEREAS, The distinguished beauty of the Burmese culture and the contribution of its people in business and the economy as well as in the arts and sciences has left substantial impacts on our global community; the contributions of Burmese Americans are particularly esteemed within this great Empire State and are acknowledged for their outstanding merit and value; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the significance of their contributions to the City and the State of New York, this Legislative Body is proud to honor all New Yorkers of Burmese ancestry, joining with them in their celebration of Thingyan; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the Burmese American community's celebration of Thingyan Festival, April 13-16, 2026; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to distinguished members of the Burmese American community.